DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 250 923 FL 014 671

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TITLE Applied Linguistics, the State of the Art: Is There One?
PUB DATE 14 Jun 84
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (Snowmass, CO, June 14, 1984). Several pages have faint print at the bottom.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Applied Linguistics; Educational Strategies; *Language Acquisition; *Language Research; Nontraditional Education; Second Language Instruction; *Second Language Learning

ABSTRACT

Applied linguistics, like language teaching, is in a state of disarray. It has been caught in the turmoil associated with the downfall of the theoretical model and the rise of several others. It is no longer identified solely with language teaching, but has begun to explore the solution of language problems in nonformal educational settings and noneducational settings as well as in traditional educational settings. However, while applied linguistics has evolved in recent years, it suffers from the lack of a clear model for what it is doing. Applied linguistics needs to develop a theoretical paradigm offering a constructive view of language, against which to test hypotheses. After a period of deconstructivism, the discipline is entering a period of constructivism with the development of a new paradigm, much of whose content will come from current work in oral and written discourse analysis. The new paradigm will probably cause an even greater separation between applied and theoretical linguistics. Other elements promising to have a major influence include some of the work in language acquisition, the issue of literacy, the question of fluency versus accuracy, and analysis of language learners' needs. (MSE)

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Applied Linguistics, the State of the Art: Is there one?

by
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[A Plenary Address, delivered before the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language at the Annual Conference of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, Snowmass, Colorado, 14 June 1984.]

The present condition of Applied Linguistics is complex. There have been a number of attempts to define it, and it is fair to admit from the start that what I have to say is not terribly original. Although my addition to the understanding of this area is not great, I welcome the opportunity to present this talk because it provides me the platform from which to say a number of things not only about applied linguistics but more broadly about the problem of research in applied linguistics and also about the relationship of the two major organizations in the United States which subsume applied linguists who have an interest in language teaching. It seems to me that my experience over the past several years--both as President of NAFSA and as general editor of the series called the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*--permits me to speak of these things, even though that experience may not necessarily qualify me as an expert on any of the matters I will take the liberty to discuss.

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First, I want to make clear that I do not equate applied linguistics and language teaching; on the contrary, I see the two as only vaguely related. Second, I also want to make clear that I see very little direct connection between applied linguistics and language teaching on the one hand and theoretical linguistics on the other. Third, I want to suggest, without claiming originality for the notion, that it is difficult to discuss the current state of anything without reference to its history. Now, when I first entered this field, almost a quarter of a century ago, I found a very different situation; in that ancient time, there was a very clear relationship between language teaching, applied linguistics, and theoretical linguistics. Indeed, language teaching was strongly rooted in the notions of descriptive and contrastive linguistics--of structuralist linguistics--and in the notions of behaviorist psychology. Language learning--a phenomenon caused through language teaching--involved habit formation, and a language was a set of grammatical frames together with a set of lexical items which could be inserted into the frames. The methodology was the Audio-lingual method; the process was overlearning, and the content was spoken language.

During my lifetime several revolutions have occurred. The beginning of this upheaval lies in Chomsky's 1959 review of B. F. Skinner's book entitled *Verbal Behavior*. While Skinner had held the view that language is a set of habits, that children learn language by imitating the behavior of adults, and that children learn "right" language because they are rewarded for "right" behavior and punished for "wrong" behavior, Chomsky argued, on the contrary, that children are born with a natural, genetically conditioned predisposition to acquire language and that all it takes to trigger that predisposition is the presence of a linguistic environment. He argued that the behaviorist view would not account for the fact that human beings are creative about language, that they are able to construct utterances that no one has every spoken before, and that they do not only utter structures they have heard before. Chomsky's mentalistic view served to open the acquisition/learning distinction, and at least in that sense has had the greatest implications for language learning. At the same time, Chomsky also proposed a new grammatical model--transformational generative grammar--a model which was intended to account for all and only the possible structures of a language. Chomsky and his followers claimed that this new grammatical model had no implications for language teaching, and to a large extent that claim has been justified over the years.

Chomsky's views of the relationship between language and mind shook the neat equivalence between linguistics, applied linguistics, and language teaching. To a very large extent, the assumptions of behaviorist psychology have been

rejected by most scholars engaged in the study of language learning, though the audio-lingual method is still alive and well in a great many classrooms around the world. The problem, however, is that--while Chomsky's views caused a rejection of the behaviorist model--they offered no clear replacement. Once the connection between language theory, learning theory, and language teaching had been challenged, the door was open for new possibilities. In the United States, there have been two major trends which have subsequently emerged; one was cognitive-code theory, a notion that the basis of language learning was not habit formation but rather an understanding on the part of the learner of structure and meaning. The learner was expected to deduce for himself consciously the rules of the language; he was to be taught through a focus on his cognitive skills. The second trend derives from so-called "humanistic psychology," largely from the influence of the psychologist Carl Rogers. This second trend has given rise to such methodologies as Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, and The Silent Way, and to acceptance of the European derived system called Suggestology. In Britain, largely under the influence of M.A.K. Halliday and his Systemic model of language, a different set of notions evolved, leading eventually to Notional/Functional Syllabi.

Still another important influence on both sides of the Atlantic derives from the notion, first advanced by Dell Hymes, of communicative competence. Together, these ideas have gradually shifted attention in the direction of the social forces underlying human communication. While that shift has contributed to the rise of a whole new sub-field called "Second Language Acquisition Research," it has had only preliminary impact on what actually happens in the classroom. There are a number of reasons for that. First, much of what I have been describing constitutes theoretical argumentation--a set of concerns largely unaccessible to classroom teachers. But these same notions have done much to clarify the role of the applied linguist. The applied linguist is the one who studies language problems in real-world settings and who tries to solve such problems by bringing to bear on them not only linguistic information but pertinent facts drawn from learning theory, from anthropology and psychology, from sociology and planning, and from other disciplines.

In the methodological sense, however, the situation is somewhat chaotic. Teachers are free to apply what they will; the orderly universe of the audio-lingual method was replaced by a broad endorsement of ecclecticism, which for some became a license to do anything or to do nothing. The various methods that have appeared on the scene are variously rooted in theory--some in education theory, some in psychology. Community Language Learning is directly dependent on the work of Carl Rogers, and The Silent Way is equally dependent

on the educational notions of its founder Gattegno. Notional/Functional Syllabi are dependent on a hierarchy of social needs as the basis for a structure and a method. What is clear, however, is that "exotic" methodologies which require special (and potentially expensive) teacher training have less currency than do methodologies which are associated with an easily accessible textbook.

What is also clear is that these various approaches have given impetus to the notion of the student-centered classroom and to a focus on affective variables. This change has been reinforced with research from the Second Language Acquisition domain largely through the work of Krashen who has proposed the Monitor Model and the Input Hypothesis. He has given his blessings to what has come to be called the Natural Approach--a system, most clearly attributable to the work of Terrell, which is designed to lower the affective filter and to provide the learner with comprehensible input so that the learner may acquire the language in much the same way that the child acquires his mother tongue. The correspondence between first and second language acquisition has not been fully established. It depends to a great extent on the order-of-acquisition hypothesis, but that hypothesis may be based on a false analogy between the order in which (and the rate at which) a learner achieves accuracy in the use of certain functions and the order of acquisition. Be that as it may, the Natural Approach has had a powerful effect on language teaching. It has great appeal because it provides, once again, a system in which there is a clear correlation between linguistic theory, learning theory, and language teaching. (Followed to its logical conclusion, it may well put language teachers out of business.) It has helped to set limits on ecclecticism by showing that it is not possible to draw blindly on various methodologies; gradually, what Brown calls "enlightened ecclecticism" has replaced the wild grasping at any straw that was a phenomenon in language teaching a decade ago. But despite all these changes in method, it is clear that the focus has remained mostly on spoken language; only in the very recent past has there been an increase in interest in the teaching of reading and writing.

Thus, in summary, the state of the art in methodology remains somewhat confused. There are a number of different approaches currently in vogue. Some of these approaches lack a sound theoretical base either in language theory or in learning theory. These approaches belong to two quite different traditions--one based in a notion of how learning takes place, the other based in a set of notions about the nature of language. Those approaches counted in the set based on notions of learning are quite varied in their realizations, some striving to remove affective impediments, others forcing the learner to overcome them. Indeed, there is something of a paradox in the contemporary

in the sense
scene/that for many teachers the best method is no method at all. While there has been a steady movement away from theoretical linguistics as a controlling element, it is clear that emphasis remains focused on spoken language and--in recognition of the fact that a syllabus has to have a controlling element--an imposition of various hierarchies in lieu of grammar. Whatever the content, the aim has emerged as communicative competence, and the focus has clearly emerged on the learner rather than on the teacher.

In applied linguistics, the situation is somewhat different. In the "old days," the term *applied linguistics* was functionally synonymous[4] with language teaching; gradually, since about the middle 1970s, the term has taken on broader meaning and has differentiated from language teaching. The journal *Applied Linguistics* came into existence in 1980, after two years of planning. Its stipulated aims are to:

> give priority to papers which develop specific links between theoretical linguistic studies, educational research, and the planning and implementation of practical programmes. Within this framework, the journal welcomes contributions in such areas of current inquiry as first and second language learning and teaching, bilingualism and bilingual education, discourse analysis, translation, language testing, language teaching, methodology, language planning, the study of interlanguages, stylistics, and lexicography.

While this statement of scope subsumes language teaching, it is obviously much wider. The *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* may be even broader in its concerns. Its first volume appeared late in 1981 after more than two years of planning. That first volume contained sections on bilingualism, pidginization and creolization, computer assisted instruction, second-language acquisition/error analysis, language testing, sign language, as well as larger sections on language teaching approaches, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. Subsequent issues have explored language policy and language-in-education policy, research in written discourse analysis, and literacy. Future volumes are scheduled to look into the problems of language in the professions, language in science and technology and in multinational/international settings, language in the classroom, as well as periodic updatings of previously included topics and such additional areas as stylistics, lexicography, and pragmatics. Clearly, Applied Linguistics is evolving into an independent area in its own right subsuming language teaching but much broader than language teaching.

While the focus in language teaching has tended to remain on spoken language, the focus in applied linguistics has expanded to include reading and writing. The problem in both reading and writing research at the moment is the absence of a theoretical base. It is quite clear that extant grammatical models will not be of great service in the analysis of extended text. In the

United States particularly, theoretical linguistics, probably since Bloomfield, has had as its primary concern the sentence. Not only has theoretical linguistics been reluctant to move to units of language larger than the sentence, but until relatively recently it has even been reluctant to give serious attention to the role of semantics. (As you will recall, earlier models for transformational-generative grammar, while they permitted a semantic component, placed that component outside the mainstream of sentence generation and showed it as a phenomenon working on grammatical structure virtually as an afterthought.) There is no question that semantics has assumed greater importance in more recent grammatical models, but those models are still primarily focused on the sentence, whereas what research has been accomplished on extended discourse tends to suggest that semantic chains permeate texts and operate significantly across sentence boundaries; indeed, semantic strings may yet turn out to be the most important components of cohesion and coherence.

Once the center of attention shifts from the sentence to the text, there is an accompanying shift in the issues to be studied. First, there is a necessary change from a data base concerned with the notion of competence to a data base necessarily derived from performance; that is, it is no longer possible to select structures for analyses and it is necessary to deal with actual language data in real-world communicative settings and in random contexts. Second, the factors involved in the construction of texts are far too complex to be accounted for by a generative model. Third, in a text the parts of the structure do not combine to make up the whole structure; rather the text is emergent out of, and greater than, its parts. Fourth, the notion of all and only the grammatical structures of a language has little meaning at the level of text. It is becoming increasingly clear that a text is not merely an exploded sentence; it is a completely different sort of structure. What is emerging is the notion that language, whether spoken or written, cannot be observed and studied apart from the social context in which it occurs. But there remains a serious problem. In an orthodox approach to language study, there is a clear set of working assumptions about the basic model of language; while the model is not rigid--is on the contrary subject to evolutionary change--the model offers definitions of modular domains and their interrelationships which together constitute a constructive view of the nature of language. In the domain of text analysis--whether written or spoken--there does not appear to be a clear set of working assumptions and a clear view of the nature of language. It is perhaps too early in the development of this new paradigm for there to be such a clear set of perceptions; one can offer a number of "good" reasons why such a constructive model does not yet exist.

The fact remains that in the absence of such a constructive model, individual pieces of research remain isolated, do not constitute part of a coherent whole, and do not in any rational way predict. Under this set of circumstances, work in applied linguistics, and particularly in text analysis, is moving only very slowly.

But the notion that language can be studied only in relation to the social environment in which it occurs has undoubtedly taken strong hold on the thinking of applied linguists. Applied linguistic research has, as a consequence, moved simultaneously in two directions--toward microanalysis on the smallest units of language in the social environment in which they occur, and toward analysis of the social structures themselves. On the one hand, some analysts are concerned with the syndrome of social phenomena which accrue to a single utterance; on the other hand, other analysts are concerned with the whole language environment in which utterances occur. It is this set of concerns which have opened up applied linguistics. After all, one really cannot discuss reading and writing in a pedagogical sense without some clear definition of literacy and of the contexts within which literacy may occur. Thus, applied linguists have become concerned with such issues as language policy, language-in-education policy, definitions of literacy, and the like.

Indeed, in a larger sense, both applied linguistics and language teaching have suffered from the absence of clear definition. In recent years there has been a great deal of talk in both applied linguistics circles and language teaching circles about the need for needs analyses. What is it that a given set of language students need to be taught? Regrettably, at least in the United States, language teaching has tended to be dominated by what might be defined as individuals who serve the prototypical audience of foreign students in the United States, largely in tertiary institutions, whose objective is the pursuit of advanced technical education and training. In Britain, the considerably broader concerns of the British Council in its efforts to provide language instruction in the developing world have played a significant role in defining paradigms for language teaching, but in the United States, despite the various activities of the U.S. Information Agency, there really is no centralized government supported language teaching structure, and the effort is highly decentralized. Individual multinational corporations like ARMACO or Hughes or IBM have each done their own thing, different from the efforts of highly autonomous academic institutions, both of which are quite different from the governmental agencies (like AID and USIA) in their concerns. Because the NAFSA population has been large, and perhaps because organizations like ATESL and TESOL have tended to bring together people from the tertiary

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sector, work done specific to that population has tended to constitute the center of activity, and there has been a percolation of that work outward, so that as other populations have demanded attention, the specialists and the models have tended to come first from the extant areas; only when those models have been shown to be ineffectual and when those specialists have recognized that they may not have been ideally trained for dealing with other concerns has there been development.

In short, applied linguistics, like language teaching, seems to be in some state of disarray. The causes are different, and probably the solutions are different. Applied linguistics, like language teaching, has been caught up in the turmoil associated with the downfall of one theoretical model and the rise of several others. Applied linguistics is no longer solely identified with language teaching; on the contrary, it has begun to explore the solution of language problems not only in traditional education settings but in non-formal educational settings as well as in non-educational settings. But applied linguistics, while it has certainly evolved over the past decade, still suffers from the fact that it does not yet have a clear model for what it is doing. In 1980, it was my privilege to edit a little book called *On the Scope of Applied Linguistics*, growing out of a 1978 TESOL colloquium, in which a number of scholars from different countries had the opportunity to say what they thought applied linguistics was. Peter Strevens, in helping me prepare that volume, recounted a brief anecdote: He told me of a colleague of his, a lexicographer, who needed to know, very precisely, the meaning of the word *dog*; the lexicographer sought his information from what he assumed to be an authoritative source--he went to a group of biologists. They, after studying the problem for some time, made the unequivocal claim that "a dog is an animal recognized by another dog as being a dog." Now, the applied linguists who commented in the aforementioned volume were applied linguists by something like the same logic; that is, they were individuals who identified themselves as applied linguists and who were recognized by other applied linguists as being applied linguists. Regrettably, they did not agree on the scope of applied linguistics; on the contrary, the definitions offered ranged from "educational linguistics" to "that point at which all the branches of linguistics and other pertinent disciplines come together and are actualized in the solution of real-world language problems." Nevertheless, applied linguistics is, I think, emerging into its own.

Whatever it is, it is not the place where new methodologies are born. Thus, it seems to me fair to claim that applied linguistics is not identical with language teaching. It may be (or become) the place where new methodologies

are tested for their theoretical validity. But language teaching is the place where new methodologies are ultimately tested--it is the place where methodologies move into the classroom. Applied linguistics is the place where questions are raised which can only be answered by the evolution of new methodologies. But methologies are not the ultimate answers to applied linguistic problems or, for that matter, to language teaching problems. It seems to me that a great deal more attention has to be given to the clienteles who are the beneficiaries of the ministrations of applied linguists and of language teachers. It has become quite clear, I think, that pure linguistic models cannot solve the problems of language teaching; after all, as Henry Widdowson has pointed out, the task of linguists is to produce technical models which account for the grammatical structures of a language, while the task of language teachers is to help learners to negotiate communication. These are very different goals. The linguist is concerned with accuracy, the language teacher with fluency; the linguist is concerned with competence--to the extent that he is concerned at all with the existence of a grammar in the mind; the language teacher is concerned with performance, because only performance is available for modification.

Over the past minutes, I have tried to show where we have been and to suggest where we are. We have come from a happy state in which theory and practice were inextricably tied. We have moved through a set of conditions in which that tie has gradually been loosened. The loosening of the tie has brought into being a whole series of newer approaches--deriving from quite different bases--and some of these approaches have produced zealots ready to defend to the death the rightness of their cause. We have arrived at a position in which we seem to be a bit distrustful of positions so strongly held that nothing else may be contemplated and in which we are uncertain whether either theoretical views or methodological stances are of great value--indeed, so uncertain is our view that we have even become suspicious of ecclecticism. The proverbial pendulum, however, continues on its swing. It seems to me that we have gone about as far as we can in the direction of lack of structure. There are evidences that structure is necessary to the teaching activity as well as to the research activity. Applied linguists need to develop some sort of theoretical paradigm which offers a constructive view of language against which they may test various hypotheses. In applied linguistics, it appears, any theory is better than no theory. We have passed through a period of deconstructivism; by that I mean that the field has passed through a phase in

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which the major role of applied linguists has been to challenge available theoretical positions and to show that they failed to account for significant portions of reality. Applied linguists have been so successful in that pursuit that virtually nothing remains. We are, I believe, moving into a period of constructivism; that is, a time when applied linguists will begin to draw together the various bits of evidence into a coherent view of language. That coherent view is likely to be quite different from anything that has previously existed. As that view takes shape, I think there will be a greater cleavage between theoretical linguists and applied linguists, because the view that emerges will be very different from the view held by contemporary orthodox grammarians. A major issue will lie in the problem of dealing with language as text rather than language as sentence. That in turn will give rise to another kind of problem; it is becoming clear that, in text, various grammatical structures do not have a single function. To put it in a slightly different way, a fluent speaker of a language has a repertoire of structures among which he may choose to achieve a particular social or rhetorical function; all of those structures may serve the same basic meaning function and at the same time some of those structures may belong to other functional sets. Once, on a long airplane ride when I had nothing better to do, I tried to write down all of the ways I could think of to combine the following two structures:

1. It {was / was not} raining. 2. We {went / did not go} swimming.

In a relatively short time, I was able to come up with something on the order of 300 variations which, if not semantically equivalent, were at least semantically similar; e.g.,

{Because / Since / As a result of the fact that / Being that / While} {it was raining, we did not go swimming. / it was not raining, we went swimming.}

I will not bore you with the full 300 versions; these ten will suffice to illustrate the point. In a structural sense, they are interchangeable; but their insertion into a text (as distinct from their consideration as sentences) is controlled by the nature of the context into which they are inserted and by social and rhetorical intent of the composer. Consider the following text:

> My wife and I spent our vacation at a place called Yachats on the Oregon coast. It was a most restful vacation; we walked on the beach, we read, and in general we did whatever seemed like fun at the moment. The fact that it rained most of the time we were there really didn't bother us.
>
> ---
>
> But that was the only activity that was at all impeded by the rain.

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I would argue that all 10 of the structures cannot be inserted into the blank. Some are eliminated by considerations of sense, of coherence, and others are eliminated by the rhetorical intent of the text. I would argue that only one of the 10 structures *best* fits the context and intent, although 2 other alternatives are possible, one of which would change the rhetorical intent. [All those containing *it was not raining* are blocked by considerations of coherence; those beginning with *because*, *since*, or *while* are possible, but the one with *while* produces a different interpretation (i.e., the use of *because* or *since* suggests a condition such that we did not go swimming at all, while the use of *while* suggests that we did go swimming rarely), and the one beginning with *because* offers the best alternative given all the constraints in the text.] The example offered happens to be written for me, and oral for you; the problem occurs with respect to both written and oral texts. I offer you this example only to suggest that current mechanisms for analysis are not adequate to the new task and that the new task is an important one if the emphasis is going to move to extended text and communicative competence.

Regrettably, I am not a futurist; I broke my crystal ball a long time ago, and I am reluctant to make predictions of what will be. But it seems to me that having said where we have been, and where we are, I am obliged to offer a few predictions. I can only hope that, say ten years from now, none of you will be cruel enough to remind me of these predictions; in short, I make them without great confidence. It seems to me, as I have said, that a new paradigm is emerging. A large part of the content of that paradigm will come from the extremely interesting work that is currently being done in discourse analysis--both oral and written. That new paradigm, as I have suggested, will probably cause a still greater separation between applied and theoretical linguists. Other factors which will have a major influence in the future will come from some of the work in second language acquisition. It seems to me that, despite some of the current orthodoxy, it will emerge that second language acquisition is not like first language acquisition, though I think it will also become apparent that the differences will vary depending upon the age of the learner not only at the point of onset of acquisition but at the point at which the subject may be said to have achieved communicative competence in the second language. I also think that the question of literacy will become a central one; it is clearly not enough to claim a dichotomous situation--literate or illiterate; rather, it seems to me that there are a number of degrees along a continuum ranging from functionally literate to non-literate and that the significance of the various stages along the continuum will turn out to be to some extent at least dependent on whether the native language is or is not written. In other words, I'm saying that there are important differences

between listening and speaking on the one hand, and reading and writing on the other; that our notion of the learning/acquisition dichotomy will have to be modified with reference to the kinds of tasks we are talking about. It seems to me that closer conversation with our British colleagues will be productive.

I also think that there is much more yet to be said about the question of fluency versus accuracy; while there is little doubt that an emphasis on communicative competence is important, it is possible that we have moved too far in the direction of fluency without enough attention at accuracy. It is the proverbial pendulum again; we come from an era in which the stress on accuracy was extreme, and in reacting to it we may have moved too far from accuracy so that some correction toward the middle is necessary. Finally, I think there will be much greater concern with serious needs-analysis so that more appropriate algorithms may be devised for the really large number of audiences served and so that these audiences may be more appropriately served. The needs analysis, of course, will concern not only what the learner seems to need, but also what the teacher is able to give, what the system will accept, what the materials will support, and what the temporal and fiscal constraints may be.

This, then, is my notion of the state of the art. I doubt that I have told you much you did not already know. And I suspect that I have not been nearly entertaining enough to justify the time I have been given. But before I relinquish this platform, and mindful of the fact that I have had this year, the privilege to be President of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, I want to say a few words about the relationship between all these notions and the existence of ATESL within NAFSA. There are those who have argued that ATESL is merely the college-section of TESOL, and to a certain extent that claim is correct. It is, in fact, probably true, since I am wearing my oracular hat, that much of the important research which I have tried to discuss will be reported more regularly at TESOL than at NAFSA. It seems to me, however, that NAFSA offers a special arena which TESOL cannot provide. Under the NAFSA "umbrella," people who teach English as a second language, and people who do research in applied linguistics, have the unique opportunity to speak to people who have other roles in the international educational interchange process. There is little doubt in my mind that, without the capacity represented by ATESL to provide instruction in the academic language, the quality of international educational interchange would be very different; it

would be constrained by the limitation that only those candidates who already had a very advanced proficiency in English could be accepted for study. Such a restriction would alter dramatically both the character of the population and its size, and that alteration would be essentially negative. During the past year, NAFSA has agreed to permit ATESL to join the Joint National Commission on Language (JNCL) and through that tie to become involved in the broad effort to protect and enhance language education in this country. That seems to me a vitally important step; certainly language education needs protection and enchancement, and the role of English not merely in international educational interchange but as a mechamism in technology transfer and development needs to be better understood not only in the federal agencies and the Congress but even among those who are most directly involved in the educational exchange process. What language teachers and applied linguists are learning about the nature of language and of language learning is not the restricted and esoteric concern of a few isolated ESL teachers tucked safely away in some non-credit program in an obscure corner of the university; it is the *sine qua non* of the educational exchange process and of the knowledge transfer business. That ESL is perceived as non-credit, as remedial, as not in the academic mainstream is all symptomatic of the general ignorance, not to say linguistic jingoism, of academic institutions. ATESL is the arena in which that ignorance can be attacked.

At a recent meeting jointly sponsored by NAFSA and AID, my friend and colleague David Eskey spoke. He began his address by pointing out that medical doctors were the most respected, admired, and trusted people in our society and that the public was most likely to believe them. He indicated that he wished thenceforward to be addressed as DOCTOR Eskey, and he proceeded to develop a set of medical analogies--that learning a language was not like being vaccinated, that testing a language was not like testing for tuberculosis, that knowing a language was not like being pregnant, and that teaching a language was not like intravenous feeding. I so much admired the metaphor that I though I might borrow and extend it. I have been addressing myself to a condition which ESL teachers and applied linguists treat. In this age of concern with communicative competence, the condition may be described as *Absence of Intelligible Communicative Skill*--AICS [aches]. The symptomology of the condition is characterized, often, by inability to write with either hand, to read with either eye, or to comprehend with either ear. In some instances, victims are observed to have difficulty controlling the tongue. Initial manifestations include extended verbal pauses and, under special conditions, eye-rubbing and inability to manipulate writing instruments.

There may be evidence of obstruction between the retina and the processing centers in the brain as well as between the tympanium and those processing centers. On occasion, the condition masks stupidity. Patients are likely to display nervousness and tension. Treatment may take several forms. In some manifestations, doses of grammar may be administered. In most instances, infusions of vocabulary are recommended together with appropriate tender loving care. Bed rest may be efficacious coincident with cessation of treatment. The condition is not terminal. It is clear, however, that no particular medication is entirely recommended. The surgeon general has urged that research be continued and that the condition is only mildly contagious.

Now any experienced speaker knows that it is easy to run a metaphor into the ground. To escape that danger, I am prepared to stop at this point, but I leave you with the warning that language learning may be habit-forming (no pun intended).

Thank you for permitting me to bring you this important medical bulletin.